

HECB Legislative Issues: 2006 Status Report

This status report reflects legislative activity through February 10, 2006

Issue	HECB Perspective	Legislative Status
Supplemental operating and capital budgets	The HECB in December 2005 made recommendations to the legislature for supplemental operating and capital budget enhancements for higher education during the 2006-07 academic year.	<p>Governor Gregoire issued her proposed supplemental budgets in December for the second year of the 2005-07 biennium. Her proposals were summarized under Tab 6 of the board's January 26 agenda packet.</p> <p>Legislative supplemental budget proposals are expected to be released in mid- to late February.</p>
Regional planning and branch campus expansion	The HECB has undertaken a study of higher education needs and options in the Snohomish, Island, and Skagit counties region as directed in the 2005-07 capital budget. HECB staff also worked during the interim with a group of Tri-Cities education and community leaders to address issues that arose during the legislature's consideration of branch campus legislation (HB 1794) during the 2005 session.	<p>Bills have been introduced in the House and Senate (SHB 2867 and SSB 6464) to clear the way for the Washington State University Tri-Cities branch campus to develop into a full-fledged four-year university through the admission of freshmen and sophomores beginning either in fall 2006 (SB 6464) or fall 2007 (HB 2867). The house version would require WSU Tri-Cities to develop a plan that addresses the need for new degree programs and course offerings and to examine ways to use the talent in the area. WSU Tri-Cities would submit its plan to the HECB and the legislature by November 30, 2006. The Senate version of the bill does not require a plan.</p> <p>Legislation is being considered in the House (SHB 3113) to use the "university center model" to expand upper-division and graduate enrollments for students in the Snohomish, Island, and Skagit counties region. The bill is based on the development plan issued in fall 2005 by Everett Community College in response to last year's branch campus legislation.</p>
Tuition waivers		<p>The House Higher Education and Workforce Education committee has again approved legislation (SHB 1986, introduced in 2005) to direct the HECB to study current tuition waiver programs and practices, and to make recommendations for legislative consideration in 2007.</p> <p>Two bills addressing waivers for veterans continue to move through the legislative process (SSB 6695 and SHB 2233).</p>

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Financial aid legislation	By law, the HECB administers all state financial aid programs and coordinates state and federal assistance.	More than a dozen bills have been introduced this session to expand or create new financial aid programs, including proposals for grants, scholarships, and state-sponsored loans to students. A partial summary of these bills appears below.
Scholarships	The HECB currently administers the Washington Scholars program to recognize top-performing high school students, and is administering the final year of the Promise Scholarship.	<p>SB 6744 would provide 100 GET units as scholarships to students who pass the WASL on the first try and maintain a 3.5 GPA in high school, and whose family incomes do not exceed 100% of the state median. The bill did not pass out of the Senate Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education committee.</p> <p>SSB 6780 would establish a “math-science scholar” high school diploma and calls for full-tuition scholarships for students who earn the diploma and pursue math-science studies in college.</p>
Conditional scholarships	The HECB administers conditional scholarship and loan repayment programs for students seeking to enter the teaching and health care professions.	<p>SSB 6783 would create a conditional scholarship and loan repayment program for students who enter math or science-based professions. The bill did not pass out of Senate Ways and Means.</p> <p>SHB 2989 and SB 6639 would expand preparation of math and science teachers for middle and high schools. Among other things, the bills would increase the number of conditional scholarships for prospective math and science teachers.</p> <p>SSB 6171 would provide conditional scholarships to classified K-12 employees who wish to earn teaching certificates for bilingual education or special education.</p>
Grants	The state’s largest higher education grant program is the HECB’s State Need Grant, which serves about 60,000 students per year.	ESSHB 2630 calls for (1) creation of a new credential for job training students in high-demand occupational fields; (2) the SBCTC to develop an “opportunity grant” financial aid program similar to Georgia’s Hope Grant; and (3) the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (in cooperation with the HECB and SBCTC) to study barriers to job training access and completion.
Loans	The HECB does not administer direct loans to students. Guaranteed student loans are a major component of the federal government’s student assistance program.	SB 6271 would establish zero-interest college loans, administered by the HECB, for eligible students whose family incomes do not exceed 135% of the state median. The bill did not pass out of the policy committee.

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Reinstatement of Promise Scholarship program	The biennial state operating budget calls for elimination of the Promise Scholarship program following the 2005-06 academic year.	SB 6811 would restore the Promise Scholarship program and provide about \$6 million for scholarships in 2006-07. The 6-year-old program has provided two-year scholarships to thousands of students who graduated at the top of their high school classes and whose family incomes do not exceed 135% of the state median. The bill did not pass out of the Senate Early learning, K-12, & Higher Education. .
Tax Incentives	The HECB administers the state work study program and has identified a need for more students in math- and science-related fields.	SB 6293 would authorize tax incentives for employers that hire students in math and science programs. The bill did not pass out of Senate Ways and Means.
Running Start	The HECB supports expanding “dual credit” programs that provide students with credit toward both high school and college graduation.	The Senate voted 33-6 on Jan. 20 to pass ESSB 5360 . ESSB 5360 directs OSPI, with assistance from the SBCTC and HECB, to complete a study of the performance and funding of Running Start students. The Senate also approved the bill last year, but it died in the House.
Technology priorities	The HECB’s recent statewide and regional needs assessment identified several technology-intensive academic fields that should be expanded to meet student, employer and community needs.	SHB 2817 would direct the public colleges and universities to expand student access to programs in engineering, technology, biotechnology, math, science, and computer science. The HECB would make annual progress reports on enrollments, degrees conferred, program expansion and/or development. SSB 6697 is similar but requires institutions to develop alternatives for meeting the demand and biennial reporting by HECB of enrollments and degrees conferred in these fields.
False academic credentials	The HECB grants authority for certain institutions to issue degrees in Washington.	ESHB 2507 and SSB 6487 are designed to penalize institutions that issue false academic credentials and to establish civil (HB 2507) or criminal (SB 6487) penalties for persons who knowingly use a false credential for personal or business benefit.

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Higher Education Strategic Planning	The HECB develops a <i>Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education</i> every four years.	HB 1434 , originally introduced in 2005, would set targets for the state's investment in higher education by adding enrollments and making sweeping changes to tuition and financial aid. The bill also would require public colleges and universities to enter into performance contracts with the state. The bill did not pass out of the House Higher Education and Workforce Education Committee.
Cost of course materials	The HECB's enabling statute, as modified by SHB 3103, requires the board to serve as an advocate for students.	SHB 3087 and SB 6699 would require institutions to take several steps to reduce the cost of textbooks and other course materials, for instance by curtailing the practice of bundling course material where possible.
Rigorous high school curriculum	The HECB sets minimum admission standards, defining the high school curriculum necessary for students to be admitted to the public baccalaureate institutions.	SHB 2706 would require high school students entering ninth grade beginning in 2008-09 to take three credits of math and would require students entering ninth grade beginning in 2010-11 to take four credits of math.
College and career readiness centers	The HECB is in the process of defining college readiness definitions in English and science and has participated in the Transitions Math Project to define mathematics standards.	<p>SHB 3241 would require the State Board of Education to define the knowledge, skills, and abilities students must demonstrate to obtain a meaningful high school diploma, incorporating college readiness standards in at least English and mathematics. Community and technical colleges or educational service districts are directed to establish college and career readiness centers to offer basic education courses for students between the ages of 16 and 21. Students could attend the centers or continue to attend high school up to age 21.</p> <p>SSB 6821 would require OSPI, in conjunction with the HECB and SBCTC, to develop a work group to explore the creation of college and career readiness centers and report to the legislature no later than January 10, 2007.</p>